

NOTE ON THE OCCURRENCE IN VICTORIA OF A  
PHASE OF THE SUBSPECIES *PARDALOTUS*  
*ASSIMILIS*, RAMSAY.\*

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(Communicated by the Secretary.)

The name *Pardalotus assimilis* was first used by Dr. Ramsay in his "Tabular List of all the Australian Birds at present known" (P.L.S.N.S.W. ii. Part 2, p. 180, 1877), without any description being given beyond what is contained in a footnote as follows:—"Tips of spurious wings *always orange-red*, never *yellow* as in *P. affinis*." The species is again dealt with in the same partial manner in the later edition of the "Tabular List" (1888, p. 4); and no detailed description appears yet to have been published.

In Vol. x. of the British Museum Catalogue of Birds (1885, p. 56), Dr. Sharpe ranks *P. assimilis* as a subspecies of *P. affinis*, and thus speaks of it: "I find, moreover, that all the birds for which I propose to adopt Ramsay's name of *P. assimilis* have, as a rule, the *third* and *fourth* primaries edged with white, the third for two-thirds of its length, the fourth only near the base, but varying in extent and sometimes extending a good way up the edge of the feather." But Dr. Sharpe omits to particularise the

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\* The substance of this Note was contained in a Paper read at the Society's Meeting in May last, entitled "Description of a new Pardalote, its Nest and Eggs." At this time no opportunity of comparing the specimens treated of with undoubted specimens of *P. assimilis*, Rams., had offered. Subsequently, per favour of Mr. A. J. North, they were compared with the fine series of skins of *P. assimilis* in the collection of the Australian Museum, Sydney, with the result that there was no option but to consider them as a phase of *P. assimilis*. The paper was therefore, by permission of the Council, withdrawn.—Ed.

exceptional variation in the character mentioned which a bird may present, but to which he would still apply the name *P. assimilis*.

As already mentioned *P. assimilis*, a subspecies of *P. ornatus*, Temm., has previously been described as having portions of the third and fourth primaries partly edged with white on the inner webs, the third for nearly two-thirds its length, while the fourth is marked at its base, and that "variably." Hitherto no mention has been made of the case in which the third primary alone in all ages is edged with clear white for two-thirds of its length on the inner web. Such a phase has come before me in specimens collected in Victoria, denoting youth, immaturity and adult stages, and this I believe is the only record of the occurrence of the subspecies in Victoria. Briefly I may say that the third and fourth primaries strongly contrast in the blacks and whites in the young and mature birds, and that the alar speculum of the young bird appears to be as crimson as in the adult. Previously to having gained some knowledge of a series of skins in the Australian Museum, by favour of Messrs. North and Fletcher, I considered this phase a constant form and one which might be regarded as a new species or subspecies.

Following is a table of the distribution of the bird in Victoria as at present known to me:—

- a.* County Heytesbury, Vic. Adult female; 15-9-97.
- b.* County Mornington, Vic. Adult male; 15-7-96.
- c.* County Evelyn, Vic. Adult male; 4-11-93.
- d.* County Mornington, Vic. Adult female; 25-12-95.
- e.* County Bourke. Juv. male; 15-1-97.

Skins of the adults, almost matured, and young birds may be described as under, the female (*a*) showing the fullest development.

(*a.*) *Adult female*.—Dorsal colour is grey on the back, olive-grey on the rump and upper tail coverts, which are slightly fulvous on the terminals; scapulars in the upper parts are like the back, while in the lower they agree with the rump colour; greater and primary coverts black, the primary coverts being

tipped with crimson to form an alar speculum, the lesser coverts being olive-brown; quills brownish-black, tipped with white, the secondaries gradually getting whiter along the bases as they recede except towards the proximal ends, where they are reddish-brown; inner secondaries pure white on the edges of the outer webs. Along the edge of the outer primary web is a narrow line of white, and excepting on the third all the other primaries are brownish-black, the third primary having the broad edge of the outer web marked with clear white; fore part of the crown of head is black, while the hinder crown and nape are black with the middle line of each feather broadly marked with white, thus showing a streaked appearance; eyebrow clearly and broadly lined with white; above lores a full yellow stripe continuous with the eyebrow; lores blackish; cheeks ashy-white; upper ear coverts white feathers with narrow black edging; throat and upper breast yellow, bounded laterally with ashy-white which merges into brown on the rear parts; abdomen white; lower breast ashy across; flanks yellowish ventrally and brownish dorsally; tail black with tips white, each spot enlarging as the feathers are counted outwardly; under wing coverts light tawny, axillaries similar; quills light slate below; bill uniformly horn-black; legs and feet brownish; iris brownish.

Total length 4"; culmen .30"; wing 2.60"; tail 1.35"; tarsus .75".

(b.) *Adult male*.—The centre whites of feathers on occiput appear to be narrower than in the other sex; other than this the sexes are alike.

(c.d.) *Male and female, nearly matured birds* (♂ found incubating eggs).—Yellow less strong than in adult and more full than in juv.; less olive on back than in adult; tips of primaries tawny, those of secondaries white; alar speculum crimson; the narrow outer web of first primary whitish, while the outer web of third primary is broadly margined with clear white; no other primary shows any trace of white as in adult; secondaries are outwardly edged with reddish-brown; abdomen and lower breast dirty white; bill not so black as in adult, although the culmens of all the stages are black.

(*e.*) *Male (juv.)*.—Crown greyish, all feathers broadly edged with faint yellow, no trace of white shafts; forehead faint yellow at base connecting the lores at their anterior ends; line above lores prominent with a velvety yellow not so strong as in adult; lores greyish-white; superciliary stripe faint tawny-white; alar speculum as crimson as in adult; throat and flanks washed with yellow; abdomen impure white; primaries brownish-black tipped with fulvous, the anterior edge of the web of the third primary prominent by a clear white, highly contrasting; the narrow outer edge of first primary fulvous; secondaries edged with rufous-brown, including inner two secondaries, which are white in adult; tail as in adult, though less clear in the whites, coverts similar; bill a shade less robust than in adult and of a light horn-black except at base of lower mandible and along the edges of the mandibles.